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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 003294

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU: APPROACHING THE DUTCH IN ADVANCE
OF THE DECEMBER 12 GAERC

REF: SECSTATE 217518

Classified By: Acting DCM Andrew J. Schofer for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY. The Dutch share the majority of reftel U.S. concerns with regard to the upcoming GAERC meeting. MFA interlocutors expect the unresolved EU budget to cast a shadow on the December 12 GAERC but claim the Balkans, Africa, and the "European Neighborhood Policy" will dominate discussion. The Dutch share U.S. concerns for Kosovo and are pleased to have a Dutch presence on the UN Special Envoy's team. They are also pleased with the European Commission's decision to place a mission in Iraq but are cautious about the presence of EU observers to the December 15 elections. The Dutch look forward to shaping the Compact for Afghanistan, but will not be prepared to present additional financial commitments to the reconstruction of Afghanistan at the January 31-February 1 London Conference. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) On December 6 and 7, poloff discussed reftel points with Desiree Kopmels (European Correspondent, MFA) and Bahia Tahzib-Lie (Deputy European Correspondent, MFA). On December 8, poloff participated in an MFA briefing for foreign diplomats on the upcoming GAERC conducted by Tahzib-Lie and Derk Oldenburg (Deputy Director, European Integration Department, MFA).

EU BUDGET: NO ONE LIKES THE PROPOSAL, INCLUDING THE DUTCH

3. (C) The Dutch join in what they perceive as EU-wide disapproval of the UK Presidency's EU budget package; Oldenburg explained the current proposal is one that "makes everyone unhappy" for one reason or another. Dutch misgivings are primarily with the amount of refund to which they feel they are entitled; Kopmels said that, under the UK's proposal, the Dutch stand to receive a 700 million euro refund, which falls short of their request of 1 billion euros.

4. (C) The Dutch are pleased with other components of the UK Presidency's package. They support lowering the cap of member state contributions from 1.06% to 1.03%, and feel that expenditure cuts have been properly made to "cohesion funds." Oldenburg was especially impressed with the UK Presidency's decision to increase the British contribution to the EU. The Dutch disapprove, however, of the Global Adjustment Fund, which they argue addresses an issue better confronted on the national level. The Dutch would also like to see the onus of EU financial responsibility reduced for newer EU states; Oldenburg explained that the UK Presidency's proposal puts the contributions of newer member states prohibitively high. The Dutch welcome the UK Presidency's proposals to implement review mechanisms of EU income and expenditures, but want more specificity with regard to the European Commission's role and responsibilities.

BALKANS: DUTCH SUPPORT U.S. VIEWS ON ICTY AND KOSOVO

5. (C) The Dutch share U.S. concerns regarding the Balkans. Kopmels voiced strong agreement for U.S. emphasis on continued cooperation with the ICTY. Kopmels was "optimistic" that both Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic would be in The Hague by early 2006. Though she "is not in the inner circle" of Dutch dialogue on the issue, Kopmels professed that her optimism was shared by many of her colleagues at the Dutch MFA.

6. (C) The Dutch agree with the U.S. position on Kosovo, with a caveat; Kopmels explained that reftel points "could be our points as well," but expressed concern that the U.S. may press for a premature resolution of Kosovo's status. Kopmels said she had heard rumors -- the source of which she would not reveal -- that the U.S. wishes to expedite the Kosovo status talks with the target of an early 2006 resolution. Poloff reassured Kopmels that the U.S. would not sacrifice quality of the resolution for the sake of expedience.

7. (C) The Dutch share our approval of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtissari's work and agree that Albanians must understand independence is not a foregone conclusion. The Dutch are proud of their support to the Kosovo status

negotiations; Tahzib-Lie explained that the GONL recently appointed a representative to assist Ahtissari.

IRAQ: EU OBSERVERS ONLY IN SAFEST AREAS

18. (C) The Dutch are pleased with the EU decision to send election monitors in support of the December 15 elections, but caution that EU participation ultimately may not amount to much. Kopmels said that the EU "can only send a few people" to the "safest places" in Iraq; the EU election mission will consist of personnel drawn from the area and will focus primarily on the green zone.

19. (C) The Dutch are proud of the European Commission's decision to open a mission in Baghdad and are looking forward to establishing "normal" relations with Iraq after the elections.

AFGHANISTAN: DUTCH NOT PREPARED TO DISCUSS MONEY IN LONDON

10. (C) The Netherlands supports the launch of the Compact for Afghanistan and hopes to build on the joint declaration signed on November 16. The Dutch, however, will not come to the January 31 - February 1 London Conference prepared to announce additional commitments to the reconstruction of Afghanistan; Kopmels said that donations for Afghanistan will be discussed on January 6. She added that the subject has not yet been raised at the working group level.

AFRICA

11. (C) The Dutch support the UK Presidency's prioritization of African development. Tahzib-Lie approvingly referred to the issue as "Blair's baby." Tahzib-Lie speculated that the GAERC will adopt the European Commission's EU-wide strategy for Africa, which she praised as "useful" for its many "concrete objectives."

12. (C) The Dutch will bring renewed interest in the embattled Ethiopian/Eritrean border region to the GAERC. The Dutch hope foreign ministers will agree to send an EU-wide message to Ethiopia and Eritrea urging compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1640. Kopmels said that the Dutch are not precluding the option of Article 41 sanctions against Eritrea if it fails to end its ban on the overflight of UN troops.

EU NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY: FILLING THE BLACK HOLE?

13. (C) The Dutch anticipate the GAERC will address the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), but doubt it will reach substantive conclusions on the issue. Though Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner is expected to speak on the ENP, Oldenburg predicted "nothing special" will emerge from the presentation. Oldenburg shared Dutch concern for the border regions of the EU and pointed to High Representative Javier Solana's reported lament that the issue was "a black hole" in EU policy. Tahzib-Lie hoped the GAERC would adopt an EU-wide action plan with regard to the Caucasus region that she said is currently in the works.

CHINA ARMS EMBARGO: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

14. (C) The Dutch do not believe that the Austrians will alter the current EU position on the China Arms Embargo during their tenure as EU President. Oldenburg speculated that the Austrians will find matters closer to home more compelling, specifically financial perspectives, the future of Europe with regard to the EU Constitution, and perhaps the EU Balkans policy.

BLAKEMAN